

Elite Opponents

Weird and "Wonderful" Darkmantles

Creature Incarnations
By Creighton Broadhurst



A clutch of lurking darkmantles can decimate inexperienced groups of adventurers, but such foes normally do not pose much of a threat to more capable explorers. Until now . . .



Fighting Darkmantles

Darkmantles prefer to fight in the dark, attacking with surprise from above. They like to lurk in caverns with high ceilings beyond the reach of explorers' vision. When hunting, they hang from the cavern's ceiling and wait for prey to pass underneath. To the unwary, while they hide like this, they look like stalactites. Before dropping down onto their prey, they usually employ *darkness* to disorient their foes.

Their blindsight ability allows them to pinpoint foes within a radius of 90 feet, which gives them a substantial advantage in the lightless depths of the Underdark. Because they use high frequency sounds to locate their prey, *silence* effectively blinds them. (Darkmantles blinded like this normally flee, retreating upward away from danger.) Other spells, however, such as *fog cloud* and *obscuring mist* do not hinder them at all. (In fact, these spells can make matters worse for the darkmantle's prey because they provide concealment.) Countering a darkmantle's *darkness* with *light* (or higher-level spell) is a much better move since it removes one of the darkmantle's key advantages; namely, that they do not suffer miss chances in areas of darkness while their opponents normally do.

It is in a darkmantle's interests to quickly subdue prey. They normally have only 6 hit points; they don't have the endurance for a protracted fight (unless they fight in an area of magical darkness). Darkmantles have tough hides but aren't particularly dexterous. Their touch Armor Class (AC 11) is considerably lower than their normal Armor Class (AC 17), making touch attack spells great weapons to use against them.

Darkmantles are strong, so they are ideally suited to grappling their opponents. However, because of their size, they prefer to grapple Small or smaller targets. While they do attack Medium creatures, they avoid grappling Large opponents wherever possible. Thus, spells such as *enlarge person* provide a considerable advantage when battling darkmantles.

Finally, darkmantles have good Fortitude and Reflex saving throws but are vulnerable to spells requiring a Will saving throw.

An average darkmantle has the following statistics:

Darkmantle CR 1

N Small magical beast

Init +4; **Senses** blindsight 90 ft.; Listen +5, Spot +5

Languages None

AC 17, touch 11, flat-footed 17

(+1 size, +6 natural)

hp 6 (1 HD)

Fort +3, **Ref** +2, **Will** +0

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares), fly 30 ft. (poor)

Melee +5 (1d4+4)

Base Atk +1; **Grp** +0

Atk Options constrict (1d4+4), improved grab

Spell-like Abilities (CL 5th):

1/day -- darkness

Abilities Str 16, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 2, Wis 10, Cha 10

SA constrict (1d4+4), darkness, improved grab

Feats Improved Initiative

Skills Hide +10, Listen +5 (+1 if blindsight negated), Spot +5 (+1 if blindsight negated)

Blindsight (Ex) A darkmantle can "see" by emitting high-frequency sounds, inaudible to most other creatures, that allows it to ascertain objects and creatures within 90 feet. A *silence* spell negates this ability and effectively blinds a darkmantle.

Constrict (Ex) A darkmantle deals 1d4+4 points of damage with a successful grapple check.

Improved Grab (Ex) To use this ability, a darkmantle must hit a Large or smaller creature with its slam attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it attaches to the opponent's head and can constrict.

Alternatively, the darkmantle below uses the elite array and is, thus, more dangerous than its normal brethren.

Elite Darkmantle CR 2

N Small magical beast

Init +5; **Senses** blindsight 90 ft.; Listen +5, Spot +5

Languages None

AC 17, touch 11, flat-footed 17

(+1 size, +6 natural)

hp 13 (1 HD)

Fort +5, **Ref** +3, **Will** +0

Darkmantle Lore

Characters with ranks in Knowledge (arcana) can learn more about darkmantles. When a character makes a successful skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

DC 11: This creature is a darkmantle. This result reveals all magical beast traits.

DC 16: Darkmantles fall upon their prey from above, pummeling and crushing them to death.

DC 21: Darkmantles can plunge their prey into areas of magical *darkness*. They use blindsight to unerringly locate their targets within such areas.

Darkmantle Encounters

Darkmantles sometimes hunt alone but more often are encountered in groups of up to fifteen individuals.

- **EL 3:** Two darkmantles, survivors of a large group destroyed in battle with nearby troglodytes, have set up an impromptu ambush in a small cavern. The EL of this encounter rises to 4 if elite darkmantles are substituted for normal darkmantles.
- **EL 6:** A group of six darkmantles lurk in a large cavern waiting for prey to appear. The EL of this encounter rises to 7 if elite darkmantles are substituted for normal darkmantles.

DMs should review the grappling rules (*PH* 155), the concealment rules (*PH* 152), and rules for magical *darkness* (*PH* 216) before running a darkmantle encounter.

Signs of Darkmantle Infestation

Darkmantles normally lair on the ceiling of large caverns, high up out of range of an

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares), fly 30 ft. (poor)

Melee +7 (1d4+7)

Base Atk +1; **Grp** +2

Atk Options constrict (1d4+7), improved grab

Spell-like Abilities (CL 5th):

1/day -- darkness

Abilities Str 20, Dex 13, Con 17, Int 4, Wis 10, Cha 8

SA constrict (1d4+7), darkness, improved grab

Feats Improved Initiative

Skills Hide +11, Listen +5 (+1 if blindsight negated), Spot +5 (+1 if blindsight negated)

Blindsight (Ex) A darkmantle can "see" by emitting high-frequency sounds, inaudible to most other creatures, that allows it to ascertain objects and creatures within 90 feet. A *silence* spell negates this ability and effectively blinds a darkmantle.

Constrict (Ex) A darkmantle deals 1d4+7 points of damage with a successful grapple check.

Improved Grab (Ex) To use this ability, a darkmantle must hit a Large or smaller creature with its slam attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it attaches to the opponent's head and can constrict.

explorer's light source or darkvision. They tend to hunt in the network of caves and passageways surrounding their lair but are not intelligent enough to remove or cover up the evidence of their feasting. Alert explorers often realise that danger lurks ahead if they find these remains.

Darkmantles normally crush their foe to death and a DC 15 Heal check reveals that this is the cause of death.

Variant Darkmantles

The three templated darkmantles below are somewhat different than their normal brethren. Each variant is presented with a full stat block as well as brief notes on its habitat and combat tactics. These three darkmantles provide a significantly tougher challenge to that posed by their normal counterparts:

- Shadow darkmantles (CR 2)
- Darkmantles of legend (CR 3)
- Half stone-golem darkmantles (CR 4)

Additionally, note that the darkmantles detailed below are exceptional examples of this type of creature and are not often encountered in groups. In particular, darkmantles of legend are normally encountered alone.

Shadow Darkmantle

A small squid-like monster seemingly composed of living darkness drops away from the ceiling above you, its tentacles outstretched toward you.

Shadow* Darkmantle CR 2

**Lords of Madness* 167

NE Small magical beast (extraplanar)

Init +5; **Senses** blindsight 90 ft., darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; **Listen** +5, **Spot** +5

Languages None

AC 17, touch 11, flat-footed 17

(+1 size, +6 natural)

hp 13 (1 HD); **DR** 5/magic

Resist cold 6

Speed 30 ft. (4 squares), fly 45 ft. (poor)

Melee +7 (1d4+7)

Base Atk +1; **Grp** +2

Atk Options constrict (1d4+7), improved grab

Special Actions shadow blend

Spell-like Abilities (CL 5th):

1/day -- darkness

Abilities Str 20, Dex 13, Con 17, Int 4, Wis 10, Cha 8

SA constrict (1d4+7), darkness, improved grab, shadow blend

Feats Improved Initiative

Skills Hide +11, Listen +5 (+1 if blindsight negated), Move Silently +7, Spot +5 (+1 if blindsight negated)

Blindsight (Ex) A shadow darkmantle can "see" by emitting high-frequency sounds, inaudible to most other creatures, that allows it to ascertain objects and creatures within 90 feet. A *silence* spell negates this ability and effectively blinds a darkmantle.

Constrict (Ex) A darkmantle deals 1d4+7 points of damage with a successful grapple check.

Improved Grab (Ex) To use this ability, a darkmantle must hit a Large or smaller creature with its slam attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it attaches to the opponent's head and can constrict.

Shadow Blend (Su) A shadow darkmantle can, in any condition less than full daylight, disappear into the shadows giving it total concealment. Artificial illumination, even a *light* or *continual flame* spell, does not negate this ability, but a *daylight* spell will.

Shadow darkmantles dwell in the deep, dark places of the world where the barriers between the Material Plane and the Plane of Shadow are weakest. Creatures of living darkness, they use the gloom of the Underdark to stalk and kill their prey. Their shadow blend ability makes them extremely difficult to spot and very hard to kill.

Like normal darkmantles, they hunt by dropping onto their prey from above, first using *darkness* to disorient their target. They are less vulnerable to *silence*, though, than their normal brethren, because they also have darkvision.

Darkmantle of Legend

A small squidlike monster with a black mottled stony shell covering its body and a tough membrane stretched between its thick and incredibly muscled tentacles hurtles out of the darkness toward you.

Darkmantle of Legend* CR 3

**Monster Manual II* 213

N Small outsider (augmented magical beast)

Init +8; **Senses** blindsight 90 ft.; Listen +6, Spot +6

Languages None

AC 26, touch 15, flat-footed 22

(+1 size, +4 Dex, +11 natural)

hp 16 (1 HD); fast healing 5; raging blood

Fort +13, **Ref** +9, **Will** +4

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares), fly 30 ft. (poor)

Melee +7 (1d6+15)

Base Atk +1; **Grp** +7

Atk Options constrict (1d6+15), improved grab

Spell-like Abilities (CL 5th):

1/day -- darkness

Abilities Str 30, Dex 19, Con 17, Int 6, Wis 12, Cha 12

SA constrict (1d6+15), darkness, improved grab, raging blood

Feats Improved Initiative, Multiattack[B]

Skills Hide +14, Listen +6 (+2 if blindsight negated), Spot +6 (+2 if blindsight negated)

Blindsight (Ex) A darkmantle of legend can "see" by emitting high-frequency sounds, inaudible to most other creatures, that allows it to ascertain objects and creatures within 90 feet. A *silence* spell negates this ability and effectively blinds a darkmantle.

Raging Blood (Su) Acid flows within a darkmantle of legend's veins. Whenever it is damaged by a piercing or slashing weapon blood sprays outward in a 5-foot cone dealing 1d4 points of acid damage to all within range (no saving throw). A darkmantle of legend is not harmed by its own blood.

Constrict (Ex) A darkmantle of legend deals 1d6+15 points of damage with a successful grapple check.

Improved Grab (Ex) To use this ability, a darkmantle of legend must hit a Large or smaller creature with its slam attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it attaches to the opponent's head and can constrict.

Darkmantles of legend are incredibly rare. Originally bred millennia ago by powerful priests of Blibdoolpoolp (kuo-toan goddess of darkness, insanity, and revenge) as protectors for their hidden temples, many Underdark races now use them as sentinels protecting little-used caverns leading into their territory. Such races often placate the darkmantles with unwanted slaves or prisoners of war.

They are far tougher than normal darkmantles and sometimes attack Large creatures; their incredible strength often allows them to overpower such creatures. A swarm of such creatures can grapple and kill even Huge creatures such is their strength. Such groups are, however, extremely rare.

Half Stone-Golem Darkmantle

A small squidlike monster with a stony shell covering its body and a tough membrane stretched between its thick and incredibly muscled tentacles of living stone hurtles out of the darkness toward you.

Half Stone-Golem* Darkmantle CR 4

*Monster Manual II 211

NE Small construct (augmented magical beast)

Init +3; **Senses** blindsight 90 ft., darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; **Listen** +5, **Spot** +5

Languages None

AC 20, touch 11, flat-footed 20

(+1 size, +9 natural)

hp 10 (1 HD); **DR** 15/magic

Immune ability damage, ability drain, critical hits, death effects, disease, energy drain, exhaustion, fatigue, magic immunity, mind affecting effects, necromancy effects, nonlethal damage, paralysis, poison, sleep, stunning

Fort +4, **Ref** +2, **Will** +0

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares), fly 30 ft. (poor)

Melee +12 (1d4+15)

Base Atk +1; **Grp** +7

Atk Options constrict (1d4+15), improved grab

Special Actions *slow*

Spell-like Abilities (CL 5th):

1/day -- *darkness*

Abilities Str 30, Dex 11, Con --, Int 1, Wis 10, Cha 2

SA constrict (1d4+15), *darkness*, improved grab, *slow*

SQ construct traits

Feats Improved Initiative

Skills Hide +10, Listen +5 (+1 if blindsight negated), Spot +5 (+1 if blindsight negated)

Blindsight (Ex) A half-stone golem darkmantle can "see" by emitting high-frequency sounds, inaudible to most other creatures, that allows it to ascertain objects and creatures within 90 feet. A *silence* spell negates this ability and effectively blinds a half-stone golem darkmantle.

Constrict (Ex) A darkmantle deals 1d4+15 points of damage with a successful grapple check.

Improved Grab (Ex) To use this ability, a half-stone golem darkmantle must hit a Large or smaller creature with its slam attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it attaches to the opponent's head and can constrict.

Magic Immunity (Ex) A half-stone golem darkmantle is completely immune to any spell or spell-like ability that allows spell resistance and any effects requiring a Fortitude save (unless it is harmless or affects objects). A *transmute rock to mud* spell slows a half-stone golem darkmantle (as the *slow* spell) for 2d6 rounds with no saving throw, while *transmute mud to rock* heals all of its lost hit points. A *stone to flesh* spell negates its damage reduction and immunity to magic for 1 full round.

Slow (Su) A half-stone golem darkmantle can use *slow* (DC 13 Will negates) as a free action once every 2 rounds. The effect has a range of 10 feet and a duration of 7 rounds.

Derro savants laboring deep within the Underdark crafted the first half-stone golem darkmantles for the glory of Diirinka (god of magic and cruelty). Since that time, centuries ago, the secret of their construction has spread throughout the lightless passages of the sunless realms. Now both duergar and drow occasionally craft such creatures as pets, guardians, or status symbols. Some particularly fell individuals use them to slay difficult slaves as an object lesson for the others.

Darkmantles subjected to the process of becoming a half-stone golem often succumb to the traumas inherent in their "evolution." Such foul creatures become neutral evil and gain the construct type. A few darkmantles, however, resist the call of evil, retaining their own personality (see the sidebar for more details).

In combat, they fight much as their normal brethren but have far better senses, which make them harder to blind effectively. Their prodigious strength allows them to grapple creatures larger than themselves, dealing a massive amount of damage in a short space of time. Groups of these creatures are rare.

Some wizards who keep them as pets have trained their half-stone golem darkmantles to attack only unarmored foes. In this way, their master hopes to remove a potent spellcaster from the fight. Their extremely low intelligence, however, makes this tactic hard to successfully execute. A half-stone golem darkmantle's resistance to magic also allows its master to hurl spells at the foe it is grappling with little fear of damaging or killing the pet.

Nonconstruct Half-Stone Golem Darkmantles

These creatures have slightly modified statistics from the half-stone golem darkmantles with the construct type. When presenting such creatures, use the modified statistics, below:

N Small magical beast
hp 15
Immune magic immunity
Fort +9
Abilities Con 21
SQ magical beast traits

Feedback

Have any scary stories about darkmantles or know a cool way to defeat them? Let us know, at dndfeedback@wizards.com.

About the Author

Creighton Broadhurst is a member of [Living Greyhawk](#)'s Circle of Six and a mad-keen **World of Greyhawk** fan. His hobbies include terrorizing his players with bizarre template combinations (and running away from the same when he is on the other side of the screen). He has two young sons (nicknamed "Ghengis" and "Khan"). His house (when it's not falling down) is an oasis of tranquility, tidiness, and order. His upcoming design credits include *Monster Manual V* and *Exemplars of Evil*.

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